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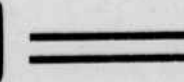
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FROM EUROPE

Author of 'Jean Christophe'

ROMAIN ROLLAND: THE MAN AND HIS WORK. By Stefan Zweig. Translation by Eden and Cedar Paul. Thomas Seltzer.

THE mass of critical and interpretative study of Rolland, especially in France, is very considerable. And, moreover, it should be recalled that it is scarcely a dozen years since he attracted attention, and much less than that since he became a figure of worldwide celebrity whose works are translated into Japanese.



Romain Rolland.

Polish, Czech and modern Greek as well as into the more widely reaching tongues. But there has hitherto been no attempt at any considerable biography: in fact, scarcely more than brief biographical notes in German, French and English. Mr. Zweig's volume aims to fill that want. The book is issued simultaneously in five languages, which is at least a proof of the demand for it.

It may truthfully be said to be the most comprehensive work about Rolland that has as yet appeared, but it is very far from being either a critically judicial study of the man and of his work or an exhaustively full life record of outward fact. As to the latter, it is, of course, too soon. Even an author of worldwide importance is entitled to a certain amount of decent privacy as to his personal affairs. The essential facts are here: Rolland's ancestry, school life, *wanderjahre*, his teaching experience, his professorship at the Sorbonne, his unfortunate marriage, his ten years' retirement from the current of daily events and his ultimate flaming emergence during the war as the Protestant apostle of a new and potentially loftier creed of the oneness of humanity.

As to an interpretative biography, dealing with the growth and crises of the soul, it might be said to be unnecessary, since all Rolland's work, especially "Jean Christophe" and "Clerambault," is in a true sense autobio-

graphical, although, of course, not so in any crass or narrow meaning of the term. That is what gives it all its tremendous vitality—the intensity of conviction behind it, the militant idealism, the poignancy of suffering, the deep realization of the *lachrymae rerum*; these blaze out in his books because the man Rolland is consumed with them. He has spoken for himself, and, so far, needs no biographer to explain him.

Mr. Zweig, who is said to be a close personal friend of Rolland, has used his material with discretion and intelligence. It is a readable narrative, sufficiently equipped with dates, records of happenings, etc., and this useful, though it sheds no new light upon the subject.

Mr. Zweig is scarcely dispassionate in his presentation of Rolland's attitude during and after the war. His own summary is that the resultant peace was "as inhuman as the war had been." If one admits the entire sincerity of such a belief it none the less remains a disqualification of the believer as a judicial critic. And here, again, Rolland needs no explanation. He has given it himself in "Clerambault."

One impression, however, is left upon the reader of this biography that is not so strongly made by Rolland's own writing: that is the weight of Tolstoy's influence in the formation of Rolland's doctrine. Mr. Zweig, whether intentionally or not, brings out clearly the weight of the impact of Tolstoy's teaching upon the sensitive, struggling young poet-musician in his most plastic years. It is, of course, obvious enough and frankly admitted, but it bulks larger in Mr. Zweig's presentation than before.

This book does, indeed, fill some part of the demand for more information about this spectacular man, but it needs to be read with the author's point of view always in mind. It is dithyrambic at times, and thus overshoots its mark. But it is interesting throughout. It contains a valuable bibliography of Rolland's own writings and a briefer list of critical books about him.

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